

The Role of Saints in our Christian Lives (Abbot Tryphon)

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Growing up Lutheran I always believe the veneration of saints by Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians was a form of idolatry. They were idolaters because they «worshipped saints». This worship of the saints was a major stumbling block for most protestants, since worship was only to be offered to God. The distinction between veneration and adoration was unknown to us. Adoration is reserved for God alone, while veneration is the respect we show to the saints.

The historic Church has always venerated the saints because the Church is undivided. The Church Triumphant (in heaven) and the Church Militant (on earth) is one, undivided. When the Church is at worship the cloud of witnesses (those who've won the battle and are in heaven with God) are united in this worship before the Throne of God with those on earth. When we enter into the communal worship of the Church here on earth, we are mystically united with the saints in heaven. Death does not separate us from those who've gone on before us, for in

Christ, there is no death.

The saints being alive in Christ are not dead. When we venerate the saints we are showing love and respect to those who've gone on before us. Kissing an icon of a saint is much the same as kissing a bible. We show our love and respect for the Word of God by offering a kiss, just as we do when expressing our love of our mother or grandmother. When we kiss a photo of a loved one we are not worshiping the person, but demonstrating in a concrete way our love for the person. This is the very thing we are demonstrating when we kiss the icon of a saint.

When we are in need of prayer we don't head for the nearest tavern and ask the man slumped over the bar to pray for us (God may not have heard from this fellow for a very long time), rather we ask for prayers of those who are close to God. No one is closer to God than those who've lived holy lives, or who have died as martyrs, so we know they are alive in Christ, and have His ear. We don't just ask a friend, we ask a saint to pray for us because, Christ is glorified in His saints (2 Thessalonians 1:10).

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